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### Book Review: Federici, Sylvia. Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons. Kairos, PM Press, 2018. 227 pages.

Zebadiah Kraft

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Zebadiah Kraft, PhD Candidate, Indiana U of Pennsylvania  
Instructor of Writing  
University of Alaska Anchorage  
3420 Providence Dr.  
Anchorage AK, 99508  
[zrkraft@alaska.edu](mailto:zrkraft@alaska.edu)  
(907)315-0005

**Book Review: Federici, Sylvia. *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*. Kairos, PM Press, 2018. 227 pages.**

*Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (2018) chronicles the lives of women in Africa, China, and South America, offering case studies on resisting neoliberal capitalist encroachment. The author, Silvia Federici, notes that she uses these places and these women because they offer the most profound successes in resisting the force of capitalism's excesses and greed. The work is part of a career-long mission on the part of Federici, to illustrate the possibilities of a world without Western capitalism's heavy-handed globalism. Using Marxist feminist background and research, Federici begins by outlining the history of accumulation and "new enclosures."

In Part I, "On the New Enclosures," Federici's essays focus on primitive accumulation and the creation of the neoliberal capitalist endeavor in order to provide a basis for study of the commons reclamation projects in non U.S. countries (and to carry the conversation about those projects to hypothesizing the return of commons centered living in the U.S.). One of Federici's key goals, as she herself says, is to "demonstrate that the principle of the commons, as upheld by feminists, anarchists, ecologists, and non-orthodox Marxists, contrasts with the assumption shared" by traditional Marxists and faux revolutionaries who promote the necessity of capitalism as a building block to what comes next (7). For Federici, the most blatant attack on the sovereignty of people and of systems of communing is the World Bank and the IMF run by the Western capitalist states (most notably the U.S.) who seek to "help" developing nations by bringing them under the tutelage and hammer of capitalism and debt economies. The effort, successful in nearly every measure of the word, is to enforce debt and labor economies that reduce the reproductive value of participants and to force austerity and Western-traditional patriarchal beliefs onto the systems that seem to benefit from more communal makeups. Federici, in the first part of her book, sets up a new way of thinking about commonism and communism that is in opposition to traditional Marxist views. She distinguishes her work by focusing on indigenous and feminist groups' efforts to reclaim production and "reject the imposition of a unitary model of social and cultural life" (7), as well as to reject the capitalist project of commodifying the very lives of the community and creating a fate for people rather than with them. In Part I, 'new enclosures' are identified and defined alongside 'debt economy', while a discussion of resistance is constantly built. New enclosures are, according to Federici, the systems that disallow entrepreneurship and

force engagement with the systems of capitalist oppression—micro loans and microcredit that exacerbate issues of personal and thus national debt being key instances in her analysis.

Part II sets out as a “path to transform our subjectivity” (77), through the study of cases of alternatives and resistance movements to capitalism in Africa and South America, and through discussions on technology, reproductive work, and feminism/feminist Marxism. The first few chapters of Part II highlight forms of resistance that offer glimpses of hope to those of us who see the destruction caused by neoliberalism. Communal forms of social organization in Africa and South America, almost entirely through matriarchal (or ancient traditional) rather than patriarchal models of ownership offer insight into how we might alter our own, Western, forms of resistance. Federici places the onus on the U.S. to make amends for and begin to respect the Native American ways of being, and to provide reconciliation (meaning the return of tribal lands), reparations (for slavery and dispossession), and begin to revere the land not for its value, but for its lifegiving ability. The cases she uses offer “a ‘planet of commons’” (89, quoting Mike Davis). She expresses that the current model of commons is not good enough, and largely is used to create the new enclosures described in Part I. What is burgeoning though, according to Federici, that is part and parcel of the shift to a metamodern social sensibility, is the recognition of the need to protect ourselves against the machine of capital. The reclamation of the commons (in the various ways Federici describes as well as many others) is the first steps to a revolution out of neoliberalism. She describes a convergence of groups from Marxist, feminist, ecologist, anarchist, socialist, among others that all want to push for the commons to be taken back. For Federici, and I would argue for the metamodernist, there is an immanent sense of feeling that capitalism has had its last breath. The problem, of course, is that even as we see revolutionary causes and movements away from capitalist accumulation and destruction, the system fights back and intensifies even as it seems to have become untenable.

The most useful part of this book is found in the discussion of the relationship of reproductive labor and the efforts to remove it from the grip of neoliberalism. Reproductive labor, as Federici says, “is deeply sculpted into our collective consciousness” (112), positioning women and women’s work as apart from and therefore lesser than traditional (male) labor. This was especially true until the last decade, and as we see well, the reaction of the neoliberal system is to attempt to retake control over women and “women’s work” through, for example, legislating their bodies and abilities, removing health and social protections. Most of Part II is a set of case studies on resistance to such attempts on a planetary scale. What we are now beginning to see is that neoliberalism is willing to go to very extreme measures to maintain power and to avoid losing the same in countries like the U.S. Federici names “almost a desire to eliminate childhood itself” for much of the U.S. and world, especially of immigrants and minorities (182). The most obvious elimination of childhood may well be the lack of any real response (and in cases like Parkland, FL in 2018 and Newtown, CT in 2012 the vilification of children by right wing pundits) to gun violence in schools, or the mockery our government has become in 2019 as we continue to put children in concentration camps on the southern border. Or perhaps we must extrapolate, as Federici does, from the use of State-sanctioned kidnapping of undocumented children sent to wealthy white citizens for adoption (currently taking place in 2019 in the U.S.) that the walls of oppression are closing in on the West. Federici’s text helps us understand other forms of degradation of moral capitalism as well. Severe cuts to education, childcare, health care and reproductive care, etc. that we are seeing in the current U.S. administration under Donald Trump’s first term are catalysts for Federici’s inquiries. Federici offers a discussion of these catastrophes but focuses on the “need to survive in a context in which the state and market provide less and less

of the means of our reproduction” and survival (183). She focuses, again, on groups outside the U.S. and then extrapolates to America, and the West more generally while highlighting these issues. She ends on a challenge to the notion (from influential scholars like Jameson and others) that technology has limited our ability to resist neoliberalism.

Based on its content and discussion, Federici’s text should be required reading for anyone who seeks to understand how we might resist neoliberal machinations. It is, arguably, required reading for anyone who might wish to teach, from a planetary, ecocritical, feminist, and (truly) Marxist vantage, the ways the world has attempted and still attempts to reduce the ability of planetary citizens to find common ground and construct a common that benefits us all.

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